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ABSTRACT

The paper describes the Oral Language Disorders Classroom (OLDC), an approach providing intensive speech and language therapy and academic support to students with severe communication disorders in a primary classroom setting. The OLDC emphasizes preparation for quick return to the regular classroom. General school curriculum is modified and supplementary materials are designed to stress success in academics. The curriculum is organized around six units: self, family, school, community, plants, and animals. Program evaluation data are discussed, including changes in articulation and functional language communication skills, and in discrepancy between chronological age and language age. (CL)

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ORAL LANGUAGE DISORDERS PROGRAM

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Language is a group experience.

EC 181365

PROGRAM PHILOSOPHY

The Oral Language Disorders Classroom is an intervention program for students with severe communication disorders. Students are provided intensive speech and language therapy and academic support in a primary classroom setting. The aim of the program is to prepare students to return to a regular classroom as quickly as possible.

The therapists and teacher in the program attribute its success to their ability to insure that initial and ongoing instruction is presented at each child's correct level of difficulty. Selecting correct level of difficulty includes a thorough task analysis of the curriculum, coupled with an accurate evaluation of the child's performance. Children who were formerly reluctant to engage in school experiences rapidly respond to the successful opportunities provided in OLDC.

ORAL LANGUAGE DISORDERS CLASSROOM

SPECIAL Special Education

The Oral Language Disorders Classroom (OLDC), an intervention program for kindergarten and first grade children with severe communication disorders, is one of the Special Education Programs provided by the Washington School District. The aim of the program is to provide the speech and language skills and academic training needed by the children enrolled to perform successfully in a regular classroom as quickly as possible. These children, from thirty feeder schools in the district, are provided with intensive speech and language therapy and academic support in a primary classroom setting.

The OLDC school day coincides with the regular primary school day. The staff includes two speech/language pathologists, a classroom teacher, and an instructional aide. Although the primary reason for placement in this program is a deficit in speech and language, the children also evidence problems of lack of organization in behavior and learning; difficulty in attending to and completing a task; and poor self-image. Although children in the class all have language problems, some have major deficits in receptive language, others in expressive language, and still others a combination of both.

The setting and atmosphere in OLDC simulate that of a regular classroom. This is done by maintaining a class size of twenty-five to thirty, by utilizing the same curriculum used in regular classrooms throughout the district, and by maintaining a normal classroom routine. Nevertheless modifications and adaptations to the general school curriculum and standard teaching methods, as well as supplementary materials are necessary. Modifications and adaptations include simplification of instructional content, simplification of oral directions, adaptation of lessons to the vocabulary and language levels of the students, repeated presentation of the same material in a variety of forms, and above all selection of activities that will ensure succussful learning experiences for every child in the group. The academic teacher is responsible for instruction in reading, math, and written communication, as well as routine classroom activities. Since most of the children in OLDC have met with little success in their previous academic placement, it is essential that all material be presented at an appropriate language level, and in the manner best suited to help each child succeed. Success in math and reading will help improve each child's self-esteem as well as prepare him to return to a regular classroom.

The language curriculum has been designed to assist the child in developing cognition, communiction, positive self-image and socialization skills. The curriculum is divided into six units: Self, Family, School, Community, Plants and Animals. The units are presented in a natural progression, beginning with focus on the child himself and gradually expanding to include various environments. The scope is expanded in each of the successive units, paralleling a child's normal developmental experiences. Concepts become increasingly more complex as new language skills are developed. The two speech/language pathologists are responsible for the science and social studies segments of the curriculum, as well as speech and language therapy. The science and social studies information provides a meaningful vehicle for the language instruction. Simultaneously, the group language activities enable the children to expand their vocabulary, learn basic concepts, learn to understand and follow directions, learn to ask meaningful questions, participate in discussions, interact verbally with their peers and adults, and generalize newly acquired articulation and language skills. These elements are

combined to integrate language and learning, and prepare the child for a regular classroom environment. The speech/language pathologists also provide individual therapy for those children with severe articulation problems, and difficulty with syntax and morphology. The major emphasis in individual therapy is on drill activities. Drill is maintained until there is some sign of carryover. Each successful drill experience is a successful speaking experience, and helps build the children's confidence as well as mechanically prepare them in the use of correctly produced sounds and appropriate language constructs. Instructional techniques used in the language setting include:

Expanded Show and Tell activities with emphasis on listening to others, asking and answering questions, attending to details, and general communication.

Worksheets providing experience and practice to develop the ability to complete a worksheet properly, which is essential to success in a regular classroom setting.

Pretend activities which encourage self-expression, social interaction, and non-threatening opportunities for communication.

Science projects demonstrating sequencing and cause and effect.

Art activities to teach the following of directions and completion of a task, and for developing fine motor skills.

Bulletin Board to give the students an opportunity to participate in a visual demonstration of the material in each unit.

The Oral Language Disorders Classroom program was recently validated by the Arizona Department of Education. At that time an evaluation was conducted to determine treatment effects. Emphasis was placed on assessing student progress and on describing student and setting variables. The evaluation is formative to the extent that future program modificatons will be based on these findings. It is summative to the extent that it is a status report of program effects over a three year period. Scores from norm-referenced tests and criterion referenced tests were compiled to create a descriptive picture of the students served as well as the treatment effects of the program. Norm-referenced comparisons were made for treatment effects in which difference scores were analyzed for proportional changes in chronological age and language age on both the Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test (PPVT) and the Test of Auditory Comprehension of Language (TACL). Criterion referenced comparisons are made for changes between student entry performance and exit performance on both the Templin-Darley Tests of Ariculation and the Carrow Elicited Language Inventory (CELI). It should be noted that these four instruments used together sample both receptive and expressive language behavior and tap skill deficits which were a basis for referral and placement into the treatment program.

THESE CHANGES IN ARTICULATION PERFORMANCE OCCURRED DURING TREATMENT:

The Templin-Darley Tests of Articulation were administered when students entered and exited the program. Data for 48 of 50 students in the analysis group were available. Mean number of errors at entry was 19.54 and mean number of errors at exit was 4.89. Entry scores ranged from 0 errors to 34. The entry median score was 21 errors and the modes were 26 and 28 with 62% of the students entering with 18 or more errors. Exit scores ranged from 0 errors to 13. The exit median score was 4 and the mode was 0 with 62% of the students exiting with 5 of fewer errors.

THESE CHANGES IN FUNCTIONAL LANGUAGE COMMUNICATION SKILLS OCCURRED DURING TREATMENT:

The CELI was administered to forty-eight of the fifty students upon entry and exit from the program. The CELI is comprised of fifty-two stimuli (51 sentences, 1 phrase) which average six words per sentence and vary in grammatical complexity. It is used to identify children who have language problems and permits numerical summation of specific linguistic difficulty. Students are asked to repeat statements and errors are noted. The mean error score for students entering the OLDC program was 69 and the mean error score for students exiting the program was 30. The percent of change for students in the program from entry to exit was 56%. When length of placement is controlled an average percent of change of 9.4% per month of treatment occurred.

THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE STUDENTS ENTERING AND EXITING OLDC WERE DESCRIBED AS FOLLOWS:

Between 1979 and 1982, 50 students from the OLDC program were returned to home schools. An analysis of the characteristics of these students over these three school years has been used to provide a composite of the typical student. Of the 50 returned to home schools, 40 were male and 10 were female. The mean age of these students at placement was 5 years, 7 months and upon exit was 6 years, 6 months. Table 2 details mean entry and exit ages for males and females by year and indicates mean number of months for placement for each year. The average length of placement between 1979 and 1982 was eight months. The shortest placement was two months and the longest was sixteen. The youngest student to enter the program was 4 years, 8 months old and the oldest to enter was 7 years, 1 month old. The youngest student to exit the program was 5 years, 8 months old and the oldest student to exit was 7 years, 5 months old and upon exit was 6 years, 6 months. Pupil ages are displayed on Graphs 1 and 2 which indicate the percent of students by age who entered and exited the program. Seventy-four percent of the students who entered between 1979-1982 were 5.0 to 5.11 years old. Sixty-six percent of the students who exited the program were 6.0 to 6.11 years old.

Graph 3 details the extent to which students conformed to program criteria and the extent to which there were measured deficiencies in one or more aspects of oral language. It should be noted that no students were included in the program who were observed to function effectively in the regular classrooms and all but one student were no more than 7 years of age. At the time of placement the primary handicapping condition was considered to be an oral language disorder. The majority of students could be classified as having difficulty with morphology and syntax which interferred with functional communication. The percentages reflected in Graph 3 were drawn from an analysis of IEP's and other pupil records as well as from interviews with staff. Specific data of pupil performance, progress and deficiencies on which placements are based are detailed in the remainder of this report.

THESE CHANGES IN DISCREPANCY BETWEEN CHRONOLOGICAL AGE AND LANGUAGE AGE OCCURRED AS A RESULT OF TREATMENT:

Pretest and posttest comparisons have been made for the TACL and PPVT. These measures were used to sample receptive language skills. The difference between a ratio of language age to chronological age is reported as an indicator of pupil growth. While authors of both instruments refer to summarize scores as mental age scores the term language age has been substituted in this evaluation. OLDC staff and WSD research staff believe that the ratio difference represents treatment effects.

All students functioned below chronological age on one or both measures prior to treatment and all students functioned at or above chronological age levels following treatment.

Mean score for the entry learning ratio on the TACL was .932. Mean treatment effect from the difference ration was 1.702. Mean entry score for the PPVT was 1.36 and mean treatment effect from the difference ratio was 2.506. These changes are indicative of learning curves prior to and following treatment. A student whose responses are at measured ability for chronological age will have a ratio of 1.0. Graph 4 illustrates mean change from initial learning ratio to treatment effect ration for all students, and Table 3 documents each student's growth.

The effectiveness and impact of an intervention rests with a measure of the extent to which those students for whom it was designed are able to succeed where they formerly were not successful. Program success is contingent upon student success following treatment and cannot be summarized by test scores in the absence of such information. Students in the OLDC program are expected to be able to return to home schools and to be successful in regular classrooms. In addition to the 50 students who have entered and exited the OLDC program between 1979-1982, information for 7 students who were in the program prior to 1979 was available. Both IEP's and Special Education census were analyzed. Of the 57 students, 72% were working in a regular classroom, 21% were in a self-contained Specific Learning Disabled (SLD) classroom, and 7% were in a self-contained Educable Mentally Handicpped (EMH) classroom. Of those 72% who were working in a regular classroom, 32% were receiving no special educaton assistance, 49% were receiving resource services from a speech therapist, 17% were receiving resource services from a speech therapist and an SLD teacher, and the remaining 2% were receiving resource services from an SLD teacher. (Resource special education services are defined in the Washington School District as two or fewer class periods a day in a special educaton class with direct instruction. Self-contained is defined as more than two class periods a day in a special education class with direct instruction).

There are a few efficacy studies in special education and typically there are even fewer studies in which program success is based on success of students who return to regular classrooms. The success of the OLDC program in identifying and treating students who have oral language disorders and are likely to benefit from the interventions provided is unusual. Students who enter the program are unable to communicate wants and needs. Seventy-two percent of these students return to regular classrooms with functional oral language. Receiving teachers and parents report that students are successful.

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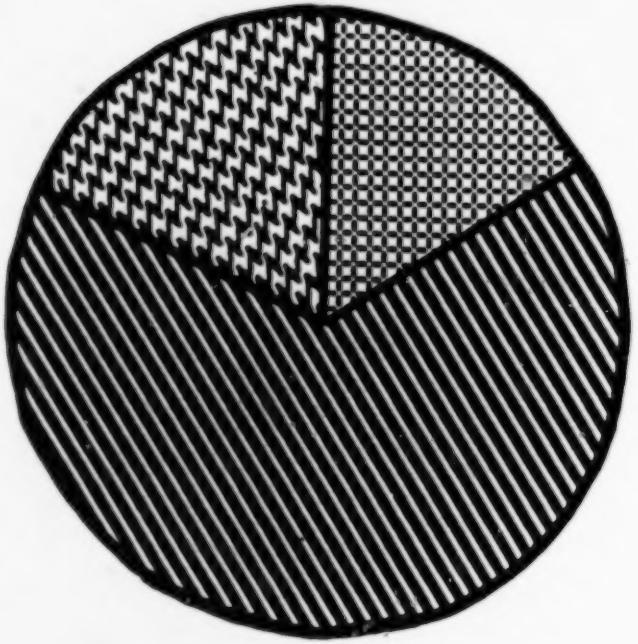
Graph 1

% by AGE

- 4% - 7 Years Old
- 12% - 6 Years Old
- 74% - 5 Years
- 10% - 4 Years Old

AGE at ENTRY

Graph 2



% by AGE

- 16% - 7 Years Old
- 66% - 6 Years Old
- 18% - 5 Years Old

AGE at EXIT

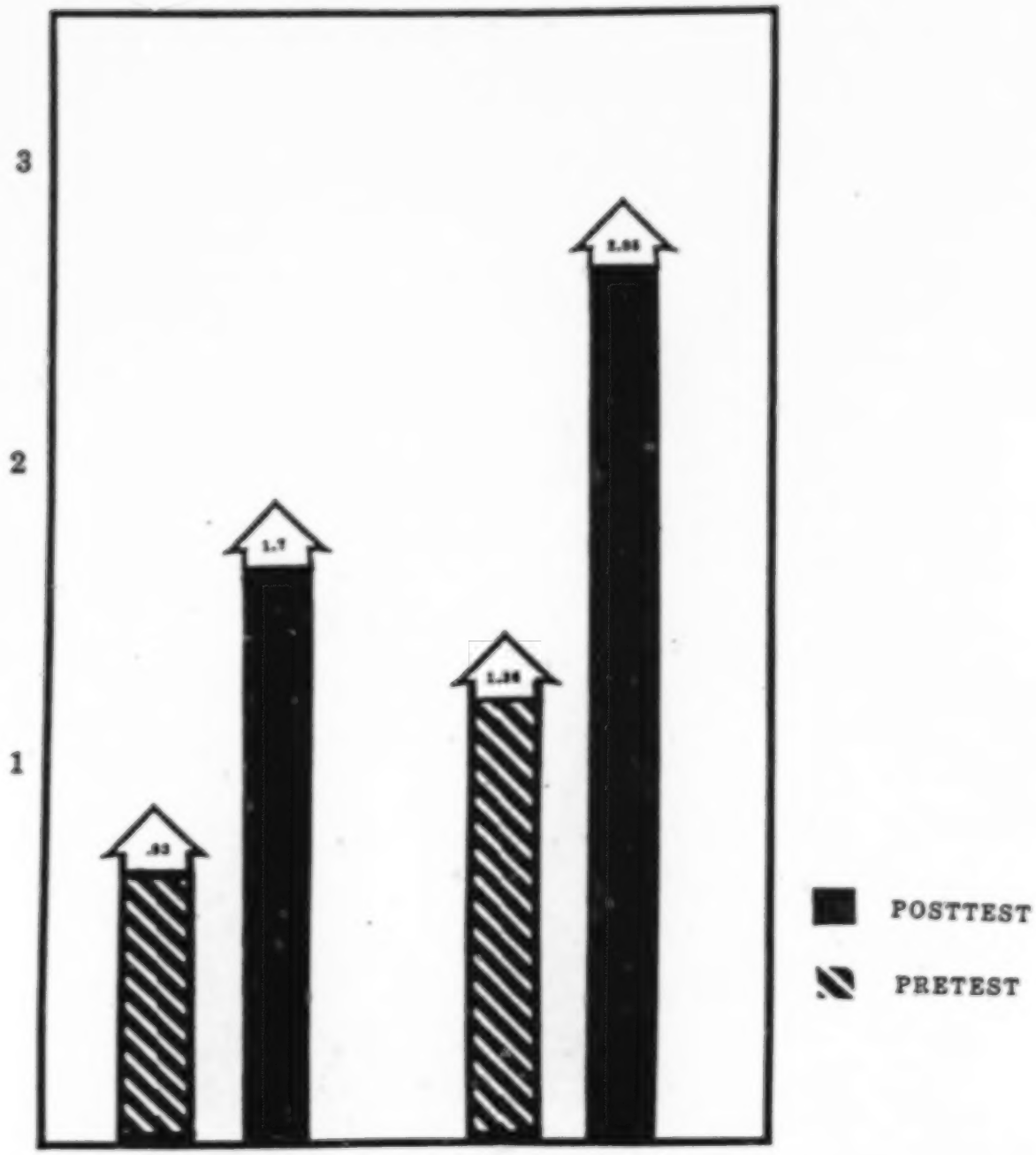
Table 2

Mean Ages of Students Served in OLDC Program and Mean Treatment Duration

	Mean Entry Age		Mean Exit Age		Mean Treatment Duration - Months
1979-1980	Years	Months	Years	Months	
Males N=7	5 yr.	11 mo.	6 yr.	5 mo.	7.6 mo.
Females N=6	5 yr.	8 mo.	6 yr.	5 mo.	7.2 mo.
Both N=12	5 yr.	9.5 mo.	6 yr.	5 mo.	7.8 mo.
1980-1981					
Males N=12	5 yr.	8 mo.	6 yr.	9 mo.	9.25 mo.
Females N=2	5 yr.	8 mo.	7 yr.	2 mo.	16 mo.
Both N=14	5 yr.	8 mo.	6 yr.	11 mo.	10.2 mo.
1981-1982					
Males N=21	5 yr.	7 mo.	6 yr.	6 mo.	7.4 mo.
Females N=2	5 yr.	6 mo.	6 yr.	5 mo.	5 mo.
Both N=23	5 yr.	6 mo.	6 yr.	4 mo.	7.2 mo.
1979-1982					
All Students N=51	5 yr.	7 mo.	6 yr.	6 mo.	8.2 mo.

Mean Treatment Effects

Receptive Language



Graph 4

TABLE 3 - TREATMENT EFFECT BY INDIVIDUAL STUDENT

	T.A.C.L.		P.P.V.T.		
	Entry Growth Rate	Change Growth Rate		Entry Growth Rate	Change Growth Rate
cana	0.6	16.5	cana	0.8	14.5
rlg	0.6	4.3	jbc	0.6	6.8
term	0.7	4.7	ebro	0.8	8.3
rgar	0.6	4.3	cenc	0.5	5.2
jbc	0.7	4.5	jong	0.5	4.6
cark	0.9	4.5	krem	0.9	7.3
chaa	0.8	3.3	dars	0.6	4.6
tind	0.6	2.1	term	0.6	3.9
jast	0.7	2.3	jast	0.6	3.3
lynd	0.9	2.9	dsch	1.0	4.3
jsou	0.9	2.9	tind	0.7	2.4
krem	1.0	3.3	om	0.9	3.0
jong	0.8	2.3	staa	0.8	2.5
staa	0.9	2.7	ronm	1.0	3.1
cenc	0.8	2.2	chaa	1.0	2.9
ryat	1.0	2.7	rgar	0.6	1.6
bile	1.0	2.4	cark	1.0	2.5
kyan	0.9	2.2	bilr	0.8	1.9
danb	0.7	1.7	shsc	0.8	1.9
dars	1.0	2.3	sctc	0.8	1.9
twkt	0.8	1.8	rnew	0.8	1.8
regr	0.7	1.6	rlg	0.8	1.8
om	1.0	1.9	smc	0.9	1.8
janh	1.0	1.6	joel	0.8	1.8
jurb	0.9	1.5	bdin	1.0	1.9
ebro	1.1	1.7	jurb	0.9	1.8
add	0.8	1.2	bilt	1.0	1.7
mkwb	1.0	1.3	jes	0.9	1.7
rnew	1.0	1.4	twkt	0.9	1.7
shsc	1.0	1.3	add	0.8	1.4
bdin	1.0	1.0	jsch	1.0	1.8
sctc	1.0	1.1	bsyz	1.2	2.0
marl	1.0	0.9	mkwb	0.9	1.3
jes	1.0	0.9	marl	1.0	1.3
bsyz	1.2	1.0	rand	1.1	1.3
bilr	0.9	0.8	kyan	0.8	1.0
jgou	1.1	0.8	jfls	1.1	1.3
bilt	1.1	0.7	janh	1.0	1.1
joeh	1.0	0.7	danb	1.0	1.1
kenc	1.1	0.6	kenc	1.1	1.2
geow	1.2	0.7	bile	1.1	1.1
dsch	1.2	0.6	jsou	1.1	1.1
rand	1.1	0.4	pgre	0.9	0.9
joel	1.0	0.4	ryat	1.1	1.0
ronm	1.1	0.4	geow	1.1	0.9
smc	1.2	0.3	tom	1.3	0.9
pgre	1.1	0.2	joeh	1.3	0.8
tim	1.1	0.3	regr	1.1	0.6
jfls	1.2	0.3	jgou	1.2	0.5
tom	1.2	0.1	tim	1.3	0.5
jsch	0.0	0.0	lynd	1.2	0.0